

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, the method
5 comprising:

(a) organizing a plurality of individual lists, each individual list associated with a different participating user and including a plurality of entries, each entry describing an item to be obtained or located by the associated user during the activity; and

(b) providing each individual list to a different one of a plurality of electronic devices, each
10 electronic device accessible to a different one of the participating users, wherein each participating user can access the associated individual list and obtain or locate the items described on that user's individual list during the activity.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the activity is a shopping activity to obtain items in one
15 or more shopping areas, and the participating users are participating shoppers.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the entries are assigned to the individual lists so as to achieve an approximately equal shopping time for each participating shopper.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein each individual list is generated from a master list that
20 includes entries describing all the items desired to be obtained, wherein the entries of the master list are divided between the individual lists.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising facilitating communication between participating shoppers via the electronic devices during the shopping activity.

5 6. The method of claim 4 wherein, during the shopping activity, a shopper can designate an entry on that shopper's individual list to indicate that the associated item has been or is being obtained, wherein the designated entry and its designated status are communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers.

10 7. The method of claim 6 wherein, during the shopping activity, if one shopper obtains items faster than at least one other shopper, the individual lists are rebalanced to move entries from at least one individual list to at least one other individual list to approximately equalize shopping time between all participating shoppers.

15 8. The method of claim 7 wherein the rebalancing of the individual lists occurs after a shopper has designated all items on that shopper's individual list as obtained.

20 9. The method of claim 8 wherein each individual list includes entries that are provided in a particular order such that when a shopper obtains the last item described on that shopper's individual list, the shopper is located close to items on a different shopper's list within a shopping area, thereby promoting efficient rebalancing of the individual lists.

10. The method of claim 4 wherein a shopper can view the master list from that shopper's electronic device.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein a shopper can designate an entry on the master list to indicate that the item associated with the marked entry has been obtained, wherein the designated entry is communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers and is designated as having been obtained on the individual list including the same entry as the marked entry.

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12. The method of claim 4 wherein a shopper may add an entry to that shopper's individual list, wherein the added entry is communicated and visible to at least one other electronic device of a participating shopper.

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13. The method of claim 12 wherein the added entry is not communicated and not visible to the other electronic devices of the other participating shoppers.

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14. The method of claim 5 wherein the facilitation of communication between shoppers includes allowing a shopper to input a message to that shopper's electronic device and transmitting the message to one or more electronic devices of the other shoppers.

15. The method of claim 4 wherein the individual lists are generated by dividing the items into categories and dividing the categories between individual lists.

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16. The method of claim 4 wherein the items on the master list are weighted so as to evenly divide the shopping time between shoppers when some of the items may take longer to obtain than other items.

17. The method of claim 2 wherein a shopping history of one or more of the participating shoppers is taken into account so as to evenly divide the shopping time between shoppers when organizing the individual lists.

5 18. The method of claim 4 wherein generating the individual lists includes putting entries for items that are physically located close together on the same individual list.

19. The method of claim 4 further comprising sensing the location of the participating shoppers using a sensor system and providing each electronic device with information allowing
10 each participating shopper to monitor the locations of at least one other shopper in a shopping area.

20. The method of claim 2 wherein the individual lists can be edited by the participating shoppers, and can also be edited by one or more non-shoppers.

15 21. The method of claim 20 wherein at least one of the one or more non-shoppers can access the electronic devices of the participating shoppers via the internet.

22. A method for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, the method comprising:

20 (a) receiving an individual list on an electronic device accessible by a participating user, the individual list including at least one entry, each entry describing an associated item to be obtained or located by the participating user during the activity; and

 (b) sending out updates and changes to the individual list during the activity over a

communication link, wherein at least one other electronic device accessible to another one of the participating users can receive the sent updates and changes.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the activity is a shopping activity to obtain items in one or more shopping areas, and the participating users are participating shoppers.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising receiving changes to the individual list from the shopper via input to the electronic device.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the updates and changes include designating an entry of the individual list to indicate that the item associated with the entry has been or is being obtained.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein the individual list has been generated from a master list that includes entries describing all the items desired to be obtained by the participating shoppers, and further comprising receiving the master list and sending out updates or changes to the master list made by the shopper via input to the electronic device.

27. The method of claim 23 wherein, during the shopping activity, if participating shopper obtains items faster than at least one other participating shopper, the individual list is rebalanced to move entries from at least one other individual list to the individual list to help equalize shopping time between all participating shoppers.

28. The method of claim 23 further comprising communicating messages between the

electronic device and other electronic devices to allow communication between the participating shoppers during the shopping activity.

5 29. A method for coordinating the shopping activity of a plurality of participating shoppers, the method comprising:

(a) providing a plurality of portable electronic devices, each electronic device accessible to a different one of the participating shoppers; and

10 (b) facilitating the shopping activity of the participating shoppers in a shopping area via the electronic devices by allowing communication between participating shoppers and allowing each shopper to locate at least one other shopper in the shopping area during the shopping activity.

15 30. The method of claim 29 wherein the communication between shoppers includes one shopper inputting a message to that shopper's electronic device and transmitting the message to one or more electronic devices of the other shoppers.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the message to one or more other shoppers is input by the shopper in text form.

20 32. The method of claim 30 wherein the message to one or more other shoppers is input by the shopper in voice form.

33. The method of claim 29 further comprising sensing the location of the participating

shoppers using a sensor system and providing each electronic device with information allowing each participating shopper to monitor the locations of at least one other shopper in a shopping area.

34. The method of claim 29 further comprising:

5 generating a plurality of individual lists, each individual list associated with a different participating shopper and including entries describing items to be obtained by the associated shopper while shopping; and

providing each individual list to a different one of a plurality of electronic devices, each electronic device accessible to a different one of the participating shoppers, wherein each
10 participating shopper can view the associated individual list in order to obtain the items described on that shopper's individual list during the shopping activity.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein each individual list is generated from a master list that includes entries describing all the items desired to be obtained, wherein the entries of the master list
15 are divided between the individual lists so as to achieve an approximately equal shopping time for each participating shopper.

36. The method of claim 34 wherein, during the shopping activity, a shopper can designate an entry on that shopper's individual list to indicate that the associated item has been or is being
20 obtained, wherein the designated entry is communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers.

37. The method of claim 30 further comprising allowing communication between at least

one of the participating shoppers and one or more non-shoppers.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein at least one of the one or more non-shoppers can communicate with the electronic devices of the participating shoppers via the internet.

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39. A computer readable medium including program instructions to be implemented by a computer, the program instructions for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, and implementing steps comprising:

10 (a) generating a plurality of individual lists, each individual list associated with a different participating user and including entries describing items to be obtained or located by the associated user during the activity; and

(b) providing each individual list to a different one of a plurality of electronic devices, each electronic device accessible to a different one of the participating users, wherein each participating
15 user can access the associated individual list in order to obtain or locate the items described on that user's individual list during the activity.

40. The computer readable medium of claim 39 wherein the activity is a shopping activity to obtain items in one or more shopping areas, and the participating users are participating
20 shoppers.

41. The computer readable medium of claim 40 wherein the entries are assigned to the individual lists so as to achieve an approximately equal shopping time for each participating

shopper.

42. The computer readable medium of claim 41 wherein each individual list is generated from a master list that includes entries describing all the items desired to be obtained, wherein the entries of the master list are divided between the individual lists.

43. The computer readable medium of claim 42 further comprising facilitating communication between participating shoppers via the electronic devices during the shopping activity.

44. The computer readable medium of claim 42 wherein, during the shopping activity, a shopper can designate an entry on that shopper's individual list to indicate that the associated item has been or is being obtained, wherein the designated entry and its designated status are communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers.

45. The computer readable medium of claim 44 wherein, during the shopping activity, if one shopper obtains items faster than at least one other shopper, the individual lists are rebalanced to move entries from at least one individual list to at least one other individual list to approximately equalize shopping time between all participating shoppers.

46. The computer readable medium of claim 44 wherein a shopper can designate an entry on the master list to indicate that the item associated with the designated entry has been obtained, wherein the designated entry is communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers

and is marked as having been obtained on the individual list including the same entry as the designated entry.

47. The computer readable medium of claim 42 wherein a shopper may add an entry to that shopper's individual list, wherein the added entry is communicated and visible to at least one other electronic device of a participating shopper.

48. The computer readable medium of claim 43 wherein the facilitation of communication between shoppers includes allowing a shopper to input a message to that shopper's electronic device and transmitting the message to one or more electronic devices of the other shoppers.

49. The computer readable medium of claim 42 wherein the individual lists are generated by dividing the items into categories and dividing the categories between individual lists, wherein the categories of items are weighted so as to evenly divide the shopping time between shoppers when different numbers of items are in different categories.

50. The computer readable medium of claim 42 wherein generating the individual lists includes putting entries for items that are physically located close together on the same individual list.

51. A system for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, the system comprising:

(a) means for generating a plurality of individual lists, each individual list associated with a

different participating user and including entries describing items to be obtained by the associated user during the activity; and

(b) means for providing each individual list to a different one of a plurality of electronic devices, each electronic device accessible to a different one of the participating users, wherein each participating user can access the associated individual list in order to obtain the items described on that user's individual list during the activity.

52. The system of claim 51 wherein the activity is a shopping activity to obtain items in one or more shopping areas, and the participating users are participating shoppers.

53. The system of claim 52 wherein the entries are assigned to the individual lists so as to achieve an approximately equal shopping time for each participating shopper.

54. The system of claim 53 wherein each individual list is generated from a master list that includes entries describing all the items desired to be obtained, wherein the entries of the master list are divided between the individual lists.

55. The system of claim 54 further comprising means for facilitating communication between participating shoppers via the electronic devices during the shopping activity.

56. The system of claim 54 wherein, during the shopping activity, a shopper can designate an entry on that shopper's individual list to indicate that the associated item has been or is being obtained, wherein the designated entry and its designated status are communicated to the other

electronic devices of the other shoppers.

57. The system of claim 56 wherein, during the shopping activity, if one shopper obtains items faster than at least one other shopper, the individual lists are rebalanced to move entries from at least one individual list to at least one other individual list to approximately equalize shopping time between all participating shoppers.

58. The system of claim 56 further comprising means for communicating that an entry has been designated by a shopper on the master list to indicate that the item associated with the designated entry has been obtained, wherein the designated entry is communicated to the other electronic devices of the other shoppers and is also designated as having been obtained on the individual list including the same entry as the designated entry.

59. The system of claim 54 further comprising communicating an entry that has been added to an individual list to at least one other electronic device of a participating shopper.

60. The computer readable medium of claim 55 wherein the means for facilitation of communication between shoppers includes means for allowing a shopper to input a message to that shopper's electronic device and means for transmitting the message to one or more electronic devices of the other shoppers.

61. The system of claim 54 wherein the individual lists are generated by dividing the items into categories and dividing the categories between individual lists, wherein the categories of items

are weighted so as to evenly divide the shopping time between shoppers when different numbers of items are in different categories.

62. The system of claim 54 further comprising means for sensing the location of the participating shoppers using a sensor system and means for providing each electronic device with information allowing each participating shopper to monitor the locations of at least one other shopper in a shopping area.

63. A computer readable medium including program instructions to be implemented by a computer, the program instructions for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, and implementing steps comprising:

(a) receiving an individual list on an electronic device accessible by a participating user, the individual list including at least one entry, each entry describing an associated item to be obtained or located by the participating user during the activity; and

(b) sending out updates and changes to the individual list during the activity over a communication link, wherein at least one other electronic device accessible to another one of the participating users can receive the sent updates and changes.

64. A system for coordinating the activity of a plurality of participating users, the system comprising:

(a) means for receiving an individual list on an electronic device accessible by a participating user, the individual list including at least one entry, each entry describing an associated item to be obtained or located by the participating user during the activity; and

(b) means for sending out updates and changes to the individual list during the activity over a communication link, wherein at least one other electronic device accessible to another one of the participating users can receive the sent updates and changes.